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THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE
AND SECURITY

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Identical letters dated 11 September 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

Subsequent to my letter dated 5 August 1998 (A/52/1003-S/1998/713) and in reference to paragraph 13 of Security Council resolution 1193 (1998) of 28 August 1998, I have the honour to enclose a note verbale dated 11 September 1998 from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic State of Afghanistan (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 45 and of the Security Council.

(Signed) A. G. Ravan FARHADI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Note verbale dated 11 September 1998 from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan addressed to the Secretary-General

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic State of Afghanistan presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to paragraph 13 of Security Council resolution 1193 (1998) of 28 August 1998 and to enclose the report of Amnesty International dated 3 September 1998 pertaining to the genocide perpetrated by the Taliban following occupation of Mazar-e-Sharif on 8 August 1998.

The following texts are appended to this note:

(a) The text of paragraphs 245-251 of the final document issued by the Heads of State or Government at the Twelfth Summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (Durban, South Africa, 29 August-3 September 1998), concerning the situation in Afghanistan (see appendix I);

(b) The text of the report of Amnesty International dated 3 September 1998 on Afghanistan (see appendix II).

The Ministry would like to request the Secretary-General to expedite the sending of an investigation team to inquire into the massacre committed by the Taliban, their ethnically-based forced displacement of the civilian population and other forms of mass persecution committed by the Taliban mercenaries in the north of Afghanistan.

Appendix I

Excerpt from the final document issued by the Heads of State or Government at the Twelfth Summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (Durban, South Africa, 29 August-3 September 1998)

AFGHANISTAN

245. The Heads of State or Government expressed their commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan, and called on all States strictly to refrain from any outside interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. They stress that the main responsibility for finding a political solution to the conflict lay with the Afghan parties themselves.

246. The Heads of State or Government expressed their concern at the continuation of the military confrontation in Afghanistan, and called upon all States concerned to immediately end the supply of arms, ammunition, military equipment, training or other military support to all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan, including the presence and involvement of foreign military personnel.

247. The Heads of State or Government condemned the capture of the Consulate-General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Mazar-e-Sharif and demanded the safe and dignified passage out of Afghanistan of the personnel of the Consulate-General and other Iranian nationals missing in Afghanistan.

248. The Heads of State or Government were convinced that there was no military solution to the Afghan conflict and called upon all Afghan parties to cease immediately all armed hostilities, to renounce the use of force and to engage, without preconditions, in a political dialogue aimed at achieving a lasting political settlement of the conflict.

249. The Heads of State or Government expressed the hope that the Afghan parties would move towards national reconciliation in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolutions 52/211, 51/195 and 51/108 in cooperation with the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

250. The Heads of State or Government expressed their concern about actions undermining the security of State frontiers, including the growing illicit traffic in arms by criminal elements and groups from certain areas of Afghanistan and about the use of Afghan territory for the training and harbouring of terrorists, which create a threat to peace and stability in the entire region, including Afghanistan.

251. In this connection, the Heads of State or Government underlined the significance of Security Council resolution 1193 (1998) calling for an immediate and durable political solution to the situation in Afghanistan and urged all parties to implement this process.

Appendix II

News release issued by Amnesty International on 3 September 1998

Thousands of civilians killed following Taliban takeover of Mazar-e-Sharif

Taliban guards deliberately and systematically killed thousands of ethnic Hazara civilians during the first three days following their military takeover of Mazar-e-Sharif on 8 August 1998, according to new information received by Amnesty International.

Since their arrival in Mazar-e-Sharif, the Taliban have sealed the area to foreign media and independent observers. Amnesty International's information is based on testimonies from eyewitnesses and surviving members of the victims' families.

The vast majority of those killed were from the Hazara ethnic group living in Zara'at, Saidabad and Elm, Arab areas of the city. The victims were killed deliberately and arbitrarily in their homes, in the streets where their bodies were left for several days, or in locations between Mazar-e-Sharif and Hairatan. Many of those killed were civilians, including women, children and the elderly, who were shot trying to flee the city.

"This latest information shows yet again how the Taliban disregard internationally recognized humanitarian laws on the treatment of civilians in armed conflict", Amnesty International said. "The Taliban leadership must give clear and direct orders to their troops to uphold international safeguards."

"Foreign governments bankrolling or giving military support to the Taliban bear some responsibility for failing to rein in the Taliban's worst excesses. They must publicly condemn these latest atrocities and pressure the Taliban to immediately release all prisoners held simply because of their ethnic identity and allow independent investigators into the area."

"Amnesty International repeats its call to all governments to ensure that all the warring factions in Afghanistan do not receive any military equipment or training which could be used to commit human rights abuses", the organization added.

In at least one instance, a group of prisoners were reportedly executed in front of villagers near the city of Hairatan. Some 70 men were reportedly executed in a Halal [Islamic slaughter of animals] killing ritual at the tomb of Abdul Ali Mazari.

Eleven Iranian nationals (10 diplomats and 1 journalist) are said to have been killed when Taliban guards entered the Iranian Consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif. Despite conflicting reports about their fate, eyewitnesses say that their bodies were left in the consulate for two days, before being buried in a mass grave at the Sultan Razieh girls school.

Following their takeover, Taliban guards imposed a curfew in the city. In the Uzbek populated areas, they told people to hand in their weapons, while in the Hazara area, they told people to stay in their homes. They then entered Hazara houses one by one, killing older men and children and taking away young men without any explanation. In some houses, they also took away young women as Kaniz (maid-servant) saying they would be married off to the Taliban militia.

Detainees, reportedly totalling thousands, were transferred in military vehicles to detention centres in Mazar-e-Sharif and Shebarghan and interrogated to identify their ethnic identity. Non-Hazaras were released after a few days.

Former detainees told Amnesty International how all of them were beaten, sometimes severely, during their detention. Hundreds were taken by air to Kandahar and many others taken during the night to fields in the surrounding areas of Mazar-e-Sharif and Shebarghan and executed.

Severe restrictions have been imposed on the movement of Afghan people in and out of Mazar-e-Sharif. Families who have managed to leave the area have told Amnesty International that they have been stopped at many checkpoints on the way. At each checkpoint, Taliban guards stopped them, asking if there were Hazaras among them, and took away anyone whom they suspected of being a Hazara. Hazara men and boys younger than 12 years old have been taken to Jalalabad prison while women and girls have been sent to Sarshahi camp.

Amnesty International is urging the Taliban to bring an end to the killing of non-combatants and prisoners by their militia, and to release all prisoners whom they have arrested solely on account of their ethnic identity.

The organization is also calling for an international body, with a clearly demonstrated independent, impartial and competent structure, to be set up to investigate these human rights abuses with a view to identifying the perpetrators and recommending means of bringing them to justice.